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IN THE TIME
OF
MATTHIAS BRAKELEY,
(1730-1796)
OF LOPATCONG.

WHITE.



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OF LOPATCONG,
BY
GEORGE BRAKELEY WHITE.

"THE formal fool, your man, speak naught but proverbs,
And speak men what they can tell on, he'll answer
With some rhyme rotten sent me, or old saying,
Such spokes as ye ancients of ye parish use."

Th. T. Aldrich, Women of the Year

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$$PREF.A \in E$$

War. In the charmed circle before the blazing hearth, I have lived in that Olden Time. Full well I know that here is a favourite haunt of fairy sprite. Mad Jack Brakley loves these shadowy precincts. The dim figure of the Gray Witch is seen flitting by. I hear, borne on the night blast, the ribald merriment of the Pirate Crew.

Age of easy faith and honest, God-fearing folk! In my early boyhood, the storyteller spoke of this foretime in Lopatcong, and I listened rapt, bathing in its legends and stirring past. For me, indeed, I confess that these simple fireside tales have lent to the history of this region an uncounted fascination and invested it with a glamour of romance.

G. B. W.

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IN THE TIME
OF
MATTHIAS BRAKELEY (1732-1796),
OF LOPATCONG.

I.
THE LAST MINNLSINGER.

WILLIAM BRADLEY, M.D.,
OF LOPATCONG, GREEN VALLEY.

IN the Olden Time of Lopatcong, several men acquired a considerable reputation, and their fame still lingered in the latter and degenerate days. The most notable, perhaps, was Johann Berger. Despite some frivolities, his great learning and reverence for the customs and institutions of the Fathers and his steadfast opposition to every innovation, have won my love and admiration. Will not the virtues suffice, too, with you, gentle reader, especially if like myself named, and of that town, to have done the levity of his character?

The mantle of worthy Master Berger descended upon Herrsch Brachtli. The relationship existing between Mr. Brakeley and him is not positively known, but probably he was a cousin who had come over the sea just after the French and Indian War. He could do poetry. Peter Klem, of one of the old German families of the valley, but whether they were is also unknown. Indeed, the particulars of his life are meagre, save that he died young, deeply mourned in the little community. One of his poetical effusions may not prove uninteresting, although I am conscious that his number is not one of the number fifty in the tradition.

C. K. L.

LICKIE BARBARA

Free and verdant, to the woods and fields,
 Loved by April rains and showers—
 Jovially and the merry brook—
 Fragrant and fair the opening flowers.

Barbara loves these fragrant flowers,
 Nurtured unseen by fairy hands,
 Barbara knows these shady bowers—
 Wildwood dells in fairy lands.

Here is our meet and try-ing place,
 Here I weave and learn my fate,
 Tuneful birds sing a madrigal—
 Amorous birds that woo and mate.

Sometimes 'tis sunshine overhead,
 Sometimes the skies are overcast,
 Thus mean taut is woman, I trow,
 Sunshine and shadow—neither last.

Bathed in the mists of early spring,
 Barbara's frowns, like April showers,
 Each succeed—each pass away—
 Barbara's smile, like April flowers.

My grandfather never forgave his persiflage and the lightness with which he was wont to speak of the fair sex. She always insisted that he was no minnesinger at all, but an idle younger son of the family who would have been much better employed at plowing such fine weather than verse-making.

Mr. Brakeley himself was a delightful *raconteur*, and in his narrative old age, when the manners and customs of the Fathers began to pass away, he loved to relate traditions of the foretime and reminiscences of his own eventful life.

Rodney, too, had learned something of the storyteller's art from his master. He was such a true believer in spooks and witches! After Mr. Brakeley's death, he usually made him the authority for his most remarkable tales, which embellished by his exuberant fancy were sadly in need of support. To any doubts propounded, he invariably answered, "Massa Brakeley, s'ib, sayd so." But it was, indeed, a new and alarming sign of the times, ominous of evil days to come, when the minnesinger's faith began to be questioned and the old legends lost their hold upon the popular affections.

The last of the true old minnesingers was Conrad Swager, a folk may yet remember. He was a good old man, and the traditions of him must needs be kindly. He died in the morning, and which obtained in the time of Matthias Brakeley (1790-1799). He had the light of to recount the history and traditions of the past. But he would not conceal from us the fact that the fleeting years had worn by a thorough change in Lopatcong, and the old German life, which he extolled so highly, was well nigh spent.

The influence of the Scotch-Irish party was in the ascendant. The English language began to be universally spoken, but Conrad Swager never spoke a word of it! Quaint superstitions of medieval origin were disused. Festivals consecrated by immemorial usage were neglected. The membership and finances of the Straw Church sank to the lowest ebb, for the founders had passed away and the younger generation had led not their godly example. Alas, that they who would have perpetuated the traditions of a sober and honest life were no more! The prophets, do they live forever?

In the year 1803, George, the only son of Matthias Brakeley (1790-1799), arrived in the valley and succeeded to his estate. His gifts of mind and person and his engaging manners rendered him deservedly popular, whilst over the fortunes of his ancient family the legends of the far time shed a poetick and romantick glamour. The minnesinger hailed him as the apostle of a *richte time* and hoped that his full-longing might be compassed by the ability and zeal of his *prophete*. A magnificent dreamer! He would install the son in the father's honoured place in the little community and revive, ere it be too late, the old life of Lopatcong.

There were myriads of conferences after the services at the Straw Church amongst the heads of the old German families. Conrad Swager was all activity. He scarcely ate or slept, and throughout the week his agitated little figure might be seen flitting from house to house on some serious mission. Rumour, many tongued, whispered that a nefarious plot was hatching, which would stir Lopatcong to its depths.

But how?

The land trouble again! The Germans, it was said, proposed by *their own* proceedings to reclaim the virtues which the crafty Scotch-Irish had filched from them in the last century. But such was not the fact. The gentle minnesinger sought only to reclaim a virtue which he felt had gone out from amongst them. Yet, he would call back the old life of their forefathers,—their rare morality and simplicity! He would deal gently even with their superstitions, because it was part of that old life.

It transpired that the object of the minnesinger's mission and the cause of this unwonted activity amongst the Germans was to inaugurate a series of grand entertainments in the style of the Olden Time. It was decided that the first should be a Circle-Hunt, and the meet was appointed to take place on the Brakeley estate. The Scotch-Irish watched with no little curiosity the goodly throng of young and old, attired in the quaint costumes of former times, who gathered there early one October morning to participate in the revels. Conrad Swinger was radiant. He discoursed with his fiddle the most stirring strains of musick. The hunters examined carefully the flint-locks of their guns. The woman folk busied themselves with preparations for the supper which would conclude the day's sport. But first the minnesinger delivered a brief allocution describing the famous circle-hunts which took place in the glorious foretime.

The hunters separated widely, and the whole valley was soon encircled with a cordon of armed men. They then gradually advanced to a given point and shouted and halloed with all their strength, that the game large and small might be surrounded in a smaller space as the circle narrowed. Conrad Swinger hastened along, encouraging all. He had caught glimpses of bear and deer and wild turkey within the rapidly contracting lines. The excitement grew apace.

But how delusive oftentime are our most sanguine expectations! The hunters were chagrined to find that the magick circle contained no other game than—a sow and litter of pigs! The banquet was eaten in silence and each went his way. Such was the melancholy end of the last Circle-Hunt in Lopateong.

This undignified *finale* furnished the Scotch-Irish with numberless gibes at the expense of their German neighbours. Young Mr. Brakeley was sensible of the ridicule provoked by his vain attempt to habit the present in antique garb. He acquiesced perforce in the result and laid aside his ti-wig and short-clothes. The Old and the New, as typified in the two nationalities, had met in mortal strife and the day was lost.

Pathetick, indeed, was the minnesinger's lamentation over the decadence of the good old times and of the manners and customs of the German forefathers in Lopateong. The younger generation no longer listened with rapt attention to his tales; his lays no longer awakened the whilom enthusiasm. Poor old Conrad Swinger! Mournful relic of an age and people that pass away!

AT THE FIRESIDE

THESE are the titles of the *Illustrations* of
Wendell Phillips, and *Wendell Phillips*.

—*Wendell Phillips*—

ONE of the most striking features of the old Boston Library was the considerable store for the man who was a student. The simple things may be said to have been his home, and his home was a library. The books of the center night. No papers were admitted, and the only thing, and even book, other than a religious literature was rare. There was one notable exception to the general *illustration*. At the old Phil. by manor-house, and tucked in a deep corner of the great hall, were precious tomes treating of history and people, and the *illustration*, the collection of some scholarly Bradley of a bygone generation, and Dr. *Illustration* Bible in large folio, and some *illustration* in the *illustration*, but the *illustration* member of the family found the *illustration* *illustration* enough, and turned with avidity to the more lively tale, *illustration* at the *illustration*.

The traditions of the foretime thus early banded down were highly *illustration* with the *illustration*. There were *illustration* and *illustration* in *illustration* in those days, which all had seen and knew about, and the *illustration* of Mr. Jack Bradley, or of the Gray Witch, *illustration* in they may *illustration* *illustration*, excited no captious criticism nor provoked the shadow of a doubt as to their verity. Fortunate, indeed, would it seem it could find in the present generation with something of the simple and unassuming faith of our ancestor!

THE JESUIT MISSION.

In the early centuries of the discovery and settlement of the New World there were no more self-devoted and efficient instruments of civilization than the Jesuit missionaries who sought to convert and subdue savage nations by the gentler arts of peace. Their influence was widespread in this northern region and their zeal and craft enabled them to acquire unbounded sway over the untutored Indians who ever spoke of them with respect and admiration. The *Lettres-Edifiantes* are an interesting account of aboriginal manners and customs and a noble monument of their abundant success.

Sometime posterior to the year 1683, a company of French Jesuits established a mission in the valley. The Brakeley family had departed thence, with the exception of Mad Jack, who dwelt alone in the old manor-house. The good fathers selected an eligible site and with the aid of their Indian converts constructed of hewn logs a chapel and school. Here they remained a few years,—how long is unknown. Certainly they were gone in 1705, when George Brakeley (1687-1730) arrived in Lopatcong.

A theme so romantick and rich in exciting incident as the Jesuit Mission was not neglected by the storyteller of the Olden Time, and many were the tales relating to this event narrated at the fireside. Matthias Brakeley (1730-1796) was deeply interested in the particulars of their residence in Lopatcong. He listened to the received traditions and questioned the Indians, and sought to eliminate the fabulous from the real; but only meagre facts, embellished by the old legends, rewarded his labours.

One of the ancient landmarks of Lopatcong which has disappeared since the time when Mr. Brakeley pursued so eagerly his antiquarian researches was a rambling, moss-grown, goblin-haunted pile standing by the Turnpike road and near where the Straw Church was afterwards erected. Authentick traditions spoke of this crumbling relic as the Mission-House of the Jesuits and told a strange story of the forgotten past. After their departure it remained a long time unoccupied,—tenanted only by ghostly visitants of whom passers-by obtained an occasional glimpse.

In the ruinous Mission-House, it was popularly supposed, were secret chambers and subterranean passages, but Mr. Brakeley by the most indefatigable search could discover none. Yet, withal, something mysterious
and

extremely doubtful if he ever did as dearly as he loved the cup that inebriates.

Mr. Brakeley viewed with much displeasure the proposed desecration, as he termed it. He was loth, he confest, to give up the associations connected with the old Mission.

The place was known thenceforth as the Straw Tavern. The new proprietor was naturally regarded with considerable suspicion in the neighbourhood and folk eyed him askance as he appeared in their midst at church. The evil reputation of his house, as haunted by the goblin Jesuits, kept many away and his custom at first was extremely small. But during the war of the Revolution, it was a popular and well-patronized hostelry; and at the sign of the Sheaf of Wheat, loyalist and patriot have found good-cheer, for mine host made no distinction provided the reckoning was promptly paid.

THE RIVER.

Longer than two centuries before the settlement event of the forgotten tale of Lapateon. Several versions found for me amongst the story-tellers of the Olden Time, but Mr Bradley's narrative seems to me most worthy of credence.

During the memorable winter of 1745-6, lit up with the red flames of the French and Indian War, a detachment of the King's troops, posted in the struggling hamlet at the Forks, the arrival of a conveyance of supplies from the lower settlements on the Delaware. Large flat-bottomed boats were employed upon the river in those early days and for a time the most expeditious means of transportation in the unsettled condition of the country. But as the Forks village was situated at the head of navigation it was necessary to convey these supplies to the Mmmsink forts beyond by following slowly and painfully with the pack-horse the Indian trails through the wilderness.

The guard consisted of six soldiers under the command of a young officer. They had been quartered for several days at the Red Bird Tavern and their vices and arrogance already rendered them obnoxious to the honest folk of the neighbourhood. It was therefore with a feeling of relief that the villagers learned of the arrival of the boats and the need of portage of the difficult trip up.

The morning of the last few days had been what most would call the dark, leaden clouds and the wind which had sprung up from the East had broken down weather. Manchicot shook his head commonly as he prepared to quit his comfortable hostelry and set forth in vain to carry until the morning.

The unfortunate soldiers followed the Indian trail leading northward through the valley, but the storm so increased in violence and darkness coming on, further progress was impossible and they determined to pass the night in the ruined Mission House. Then morning was a long, raw one and they were benumbed with cold, but an hour, blacker still, that made them a good deal more comfortable with a proud draught of rum chased down their throats. They abandoned themselves to a revelry and long, dull sleep.

In the midst of this wild orgie, the sound of the drumming reported near by and a strange grim man, dressed in black, entered. He was the drunken native Indian, his face was red as a flower. Affected with a peculiar disease, something in his words appeared to all grew dim and

appearance of the supernatural, awed them into silence, and they stood regarding only the movements of the intruder. He advanced to the board without speaking and seizing the flagon of liquor held it aloft before the bright light of the fire.

"Drink!" cried the roistering soldiery, delighted at this convivial sign in their strange guest, and with a maudlin shout, they raised full cups to their lips, "drink, it is Forgetfulness!"

But the Intruder turned abruptly, and as his stern glance met the company the cups fell untasted from their lips and a painful silence ensued, broken only by the fierce wail of the storm and the crackling of the logs in the fireplace. A smile played upon his features as he again uplifted the flagon and poured the contents to the last drop upon the hearthstone. A stifling vapour arose from the burning liquid, filling the apartment with its deadly fumes.

The storm abated and the morrow broke clear and cold. The deep snow had wellnigh covered the old ruin with a winding-sheet,—sepulchre to the dead! All was silent within, save the wintry blast which whistled through the chinks in the logs. The fire on the hearth had burned out. The remains of the saturnalia were strewed around—the empty flagon and the half-filled cups. And the Revellers, lifeless and cold, lay stretched upon the bare floor of the charnel-house.

reports his strong-box from time to time for private inspection. More than an hundred and fifty years after the events narrated above, my great-great-grandfather, Matthias Brakeley (1737-1796), saw this legendary personage and caught a glimpse of his ill-gotten gold.

MY GRANDFATHER'S ADVENTURE.

One October day in the last century, Mr. Brakeley, accompanied by his servant Rodney, had been hunting in the neighborhood of Phals' Point; and night coming on and the distance from home being considerable, they prepared to encamp. This plan had been adopted with great opposition on the part of the superstitious negro. The evil reputation of the place as a favorite resort of goblins was enough to condemn it, and he urged in vain that they quit so dangerous a locality.

It was a matter of some satisfaction to Rodney, as he reflected upon the foolhardy conduct of his master, that the camp lay on the opposite side of the river, rather north of the Point. A supper of game was partaken of and preparations made for the night's rest; but as he confessed afterward to his friend Jack, he was too nervous to sleep and kept anxious guard. Towards midnight his vigil was rewarded by seeing a light made by a pitch pine torch move around and up and down the other bank in a most suspicious manner. It seemed to be carried by a person in search of something—no doubt by one of that pestilent crew of pirates! Hastily arousing Mr. Brakeley, he acquainted him with his alarming discovery. Sure enough, there was a little, burly old man in a strange and antique garb, standing upon a broad, flat stone by the water's edge immediately below the Point and intently examining the pebbly bottom with his flaming light. The terror-stricken negro prepared for precipitate flight, but his master insisted that they remain to watch the movements of the old pirate.

"An' warn't yo' afear'd to stay thar, Roddy?" inquired Jack, when the story was told him years afterwards.

"Yo' can imagin' my dis'greeable sensations," replied Rodney. "Vilky I be say'd, 'Mas'r Brak'ley, *an' yo' shud a-wake!*' and Ise come a-boutly na' a-hidin' an' a-beatin' him!" He was frequently inclined to inflict corporal punishment on his master by way of keeping him out of harm.

Hans

THE LEGEND OF CALIXTO.

Below the Foul Rift—a wild and dangerous spot—the rapid Delaware narrows and widens into a beautiful lake-like expanse. Cottonwood and maple trees grow luxuriantly on its banks, and beyond the fringe of forest the country stretches away in fruitful fields and verdant pastures. On the sunny side of this picturesque water, lived a lonely old man named O'Mally, about the time of the French and Indian War. It was an humble dwelling he had built for himself here, rudely constructed of logs and thatched with straw, and he cultivated a small patch of ground hard by, which with hunting and fishing afforded him a livelihood. In my boyhood a rambling old house, with broad porches two stories high and a great brick chimney, stood on the former site of this cabin.

Many dark stories were told about O'Mally. He was said by some to be an ex-pirate and by others an ex-convict who had escaped hither from the old country. Whether these accusations had any foundation in fact or not, the few settlers who were dispersed over this region in those early days did not regard his society as desirable and carefully avoided him, which apparently was just what he wanted.

After living here a long time alone, he disappeared suddenly. It was supposed that he had quit the place permanently and his neighbours felt no little relief to be rid of one whom they could not help looking upon with suspicion. He was absent several months, and then very much to their surprise and disgust returned to dwell in their midst again. He brought back with him a little girl with fair, curling hair and bright blue eyes. His love for the child seemed to pass all bounds and they were always seen together. Thus she grew up into beautiful girlhood.

Several young men living across the river in the vicinity of O'Mally's cabin had been disposed at first to pay attentions to his daughter, as she was commonly called; but an hostile demonstration on the part of the old man brought these courtships in each case to a premature and undignified close. He was not desirous, evidently, that the girl should enter into wedlock, and his wishes in the matter soon became known and respected.

The objections of O'Mally seemed a bar to obtaining the hand of his daughter to all save Calixto, the son of the chief Phillip. This youthful Indian was exceedingly handsome, intelligent and of amiable disposition. Although still quite young, he was well known and much respected by the settlers in the neighbourhood and was a frequent and welcome guest at their

THE LEGEND OF THE GRAY WITCH.

On a gentle declivity of the mountain, looking down into the valley anent the manor of Brakeley, stood a rude log cabin late in the last century. It has disappeared long ago, and the adjoining close has grown wild, but a mournful tradition preserves from oblivion the memory of the last unhappy occupant. My great-aunt pointed out to me the site of this former habitation.

An hardy pioneer and trapper made the clearing in the woods and built the cabin. He is said to have met a violent death afterwards in an affray with Indians, and the lonesome dwelling remained a long time untenanted. Strange sights had been seen and strange sounds heard hereabouts, and folk in those superstitious times regarded the locality as haunted.

A few years passed away, and an unknown woman took up her abode in this out-of-the-way place. She was middle-aged, of commanding stature, with dark hair and piercing black eyes, and still retained the traces of youthful beauty. She knew nobody and nobody knew her, or whence she came. She never appeared at church, nor mingled with the people. The minister had visited her and endeavored to incline her to attend on the word of God, but she rebuffed him, and gave no heed to his counsel. The small world of Lopateong came to regard her as a witch and in league with the devil, and shunned her accordingly. She was always attired in plain gray, which, with her singular behaviour, obtained for her the opprobrious name of the Gray Witch.

The shadow of this dark and mysterious woman rested on the valley. She was seen abroad seldom, and then, as she strode nonchalantly along, the little children playing by the roadside fled in dismay before her. Was it simply the impenetrable veil which hid her life from common view that produced so much terror? Perhaps so; yet observing folk remarked that her appearance usually portended some dire calamity. Before every death which took place in the community the Gray Witch had been seen to pass by, as if in warning. Dread messenger!

The minister felt it was incumbent upon him to make yet another attempt to solve the mystery which enveloped the strange woman; and one pleasant afternoon in summer time he wended his way slowly and thoughtfully towards her humble abode. An air of neatness and cleanliness,

although

although of great poverty, was visible in the surroundings of the place. The little garden was carefully weeded, and common vines climbed lovingly over the rough hewn logs with which the cabin was constructed. Somewhat encouraged by these signs he rapped gently at the door. After waiting long it was opened wide, and the dark eyes of the Gray Witch fell upon him—those dreadful, piercing eyes!

With some embarrassment the minister bade her good day, and entered.

"A very lonesome life you seem to lead here, Mistress — Gray," he began, and then added inquiringly, "I know no other name?"

The woman vouchsafed no reply, and continued to multiply her count her shapely mouth.

"And again I have come hither," he continued kindly, "to beg of your heavenly guidance in your walk through life. My mission—"

"Ye have come in vain," interrupted the woman harshly. "I crave simply to be let alone."

A shade passed over the visitor's countenance.

"Apparently, ye have known sorrow and griefs. Have ye then no confession to make?" asked the man of God, eagerly. "Nothing, no repent of?"

The woman advanced a step and laying her hand upon his shoulder replied, "Good Sir, ye can comfort me in no wise. I part her reproach."

And the minister departed sadly.

Summer time had fled, and cold, wintry winds swept down the hills, and the snow lay deep upon the ground. The Gray Witch died here, and not little lately, and the last time he was seen he looked so lean and feeble. Late one night, some deer-stalkers descending the mountain heard moan and cries of distress issuing from her lonely cabin. They were paralyzed with fear and ventured not to enter within. Harkening, they searched the neighbourhood and collected a large party to surround the mysterious woman. The crowd stood back respectfully, whilst the minister entered the hut and entered the dwelling. It was a moment's rest that met his eyes. On an humble pallet lay the dead body of the Gray Witch, whose face, with her raven lock, did a terrible and horrible record. She could have done but a little to signify repentance, and her name was hushed with the silence of a dust, she had made nothing of her work in the long day, though her dying couch the man of the Cross. That record, that history and that history perished with her.

The singular character and tragick fate of the Gray Witch left a deep and painful impression on the community. Mr. Brakeley, who was one of the party accompanying the minister on that terrible winter night, was wont to relate the incident in after years; and he felt that hidden in the mystery of her identity was an heart-history which the world would have been wiser and better to have known.

Mr. Brakeley and his servant would have fled, but the sprite—he seemed well-disposed—signified that they should tarry and resume the task. How they strove! And the massive chest, filled no doubt to the brim with gold, appeared at the surface of the lake. One more effort would land it safely upon the bank. Suddenly, the spook advanced and himself laid hold of the chain. It snapped asunder, and the treasure with a loud splash disappeared in the waters. Then how he laughed and cruelly mocked them!

It was several days before the treasure seekers durst return. Still visible upon the lake bank were the marks of the arduous struggle and of their precipitate flight; but the treasure they sought was locked in the bosom of the deep waters.

THE POETRY OF GRANNY GRETCHEL

Wrote the following verses:

The dithyramb, rhyming in German, would obtain the relation of an *Odyssey* relating to the hard troubles of the first settlers. But neither I nor my wife could learn except the interesting story of the life of the old settler.

In the Olden Times, an aged dame, May possibly be she, was more familiarly called, Granny Gretchel, dwelt in the valley. She had already reached a great age, was very charitable and devout, and every pleasant Sunday that her infirmities permitted, she would go down slowly and laboriously to the Straw Church.

Granny Gretchel had lived many years in Logansport, having come in the early days of settlement by the German settlers. In her long life she had experienced the joys and dangers of the frontier. She witnessed the exciting events of the old French War. She recalled bitterly the unjust spoliation of many of the pioneer families by the newly arrived Scotch Irish. "But," she would invariably add, "make no mistake, 'Wron'g shud be made right, and the Bred'gins will come out o' their own."

This theme became a monomania with her, and as she moved forward with years, she solemnly talked of *Wron'g shud be made right*. As she sat on the sunny porch of her cottage, the neighbours usually could hear her muttering to herself, "Wron'g shud be made right, and the Bred'gins will come out o' their own." Poor old Granny Gretchel!

One pleasant Sunday morning in summer time, I solemnly thronged a horse-hipped carriage to the Straw Church to join the pastor, Mr. Fennel, in expounding the Scriptures. Several of the ladies and young men had gathered at the port of entry, the service should be in, discussing the comparative merits of the apple and the peach.

I do not observe Granny Gretchel in the congregation, and on my return I enquire, "Where is she?" For she was always there.

"Nay," replied his neighbour, the sexton, "she is not here. Don't think of perceiving the Granny, but be content to the people." "And what will I do then?"

"We feared, Mistress Gretchel, that we should not see you here this Lord's day," said the pastor, kindly greeting his venerable parishioner.

"Ah, Grandmother Gretchel," spoke Matthias Brakeley affectionately, "I give thanks that thou mayest be with us yet awhile."

"Son, I shall be here yet many a day," replied Granny Gretchel. "Wrong shall be made right." She waved her staff aloft and her eyes gleamed. "Alack-a-day, you will not live to see it, but I shall."

Some of the young men might have smiled compassionately, but something in her weird appearance impressed them and imposed silence. And all entered the sacred edifice.

The seasons come and go in Lopateong—spring-time and harvest and cold, bleak winter. Granny Gretchel still lived, but by reason of her many infirmities she was unable to attend any longer at the Straw Church. Still she muttered to herself in her hours of reverie, "Wrong shall be made right and the Brakeleys will come into their own." The old theme! Would her prophecy ever come true? Yes, she would answer, I shall live to see it!

In the year 1805, George Brakeley (1763-1833), the last male representative of his ancient family, returned to Lopateong and repurchased a part of his ancestral acres. The occasion was a joyful one to such of the old German families as yet resided in the valley; and according to a time-honoured custom, a large company assembled to witness the execution of the papers and partake of the feast which would follow.

"Alas, that Granny Gretchel should be absent," remarked one of the guests.

"Wouldst thou expect," asked his neighbour, "that, bedridden these twenty years, she could now come hither? But attend, the magistrate reads the deeds."

At this self-same moment, there was a loud rap at the door. Before the assembled company could recover from their surprise, it flew open and Granny Gretchel entered. Folk were awestricken, for there was something preternatural in the appearance of the venerable dame who stood before them. Her whole frame quivered with emotion and her eyes gleamed with fulness of joy.

She waved her staff aloft.

"I have lived," she cried tremulously, "to see wrong made right and the Brakeleys come into their own!" But the excitement was too much. She tottered and would have fallen to the floor had not Mr. Brakeley caught

her

PATRIOT OR LOYALIST?

The attitude of the Germans of Lopatcong in the war of the Revolution has been a matter of controversy. From my own researches I am convinced that generally speaking they took no active part in the long and bitter conflict. Their isolation from the great world and their hostility to the Scotch-Irish faction, who vociferously espoused the Patriot cause, contributed to this result, whilst their uprightness and traditional friendship for the Leni-Lenapes led both combatants to respect their neutrality and to offer them no molestation.

Mr. Brakeley's influence was felt for good in the little community. His probity, sympathetic nature and courteous demeanour gained him the confidence of friend and foe. By respecting others' rights he taught them to respect his own,—a favourite maxim with him.

"He must have known Gen. Maxwell and Capt. Anderson, and the tory Lieut. Moody?" I once asked my great-aunt.

"Yes, child," she replied. "Indeed, on one occasion he gave protection to Moody,—an act of kindness which the spy had an opportunity afterwards to return."

She put aside her knitting and seated herself in the settle by the fire. Rare and delightful companion "in winter's tedious night"! She possessed the pleasing art of relating the events and traditions of the good old times; she was the last of the storytellers in Lopatcong.

I stir the smouldering embers in the fireplace and they burst into flames. The past was not dead.

MY GREAT-AUNT'S TALE.

One stormy winter night, whilst the Patriot army lay encamped at Morristown, a stranger knocked at the door of Mr. Brakeley's house and entreated entertainment for himself and his horse. He was wet, cold and hungry—a sufficient claim to the master's hospitality.

The stranger guest was tall and powerfully built and of pleasing address. Mr. Brakeley was charmed with his conversation, impressing him as that of a remarkable man. As they sat before the fire, he would fain have learned something of his history; but to his inquiries, he replied
evasively

evasively that he was a farmer, living at our house, whom the troublous times had found it necessary to take up arms in defence of his rights. And soon he retired to his chamber.

Later in the night a company of troops of Washington's army surrounded the house, led by a young lieutenant, who rapped loudly at the door and demanded admission. Mr. Brakeley, aroused, inquired the cause of the intrusion.

"And so, old Gray-locks," said the officer insolently, "you have turned traitor outright and harbour spies like Mody."

"Young man," replied Mr. Brakeley, indignantly, seizing him by the shoulder, "speak thus again at your peril."

"But even now, you have under your protection the spy, Moody," persisted the officer.

"It may be so," answered Mr. Brakeley. "A man came at nightfall to my door, wet, cold and hungry. My father never turned such away, nor I. And whether he be Patriot or Loyalist, while he remains under my roof he must not be molested."

Something in his determined look and manner awed the soldiers, or perhaps they suspected from his boldness that a larger force might be at hand to succour him. At all events, after an hurried parley, they went away.

As the door closed the stranger quietly stepped into the passage and grasped his protector by the hand.

"Sir," said Mr. Brakeley, "while you are under my roof, I would willingly suffer no harm to befall you; but if you are indeed Loyal, Moody, and an enemy of your country, I must ask you to depart."

Rodney brought his horse to the door and held a couple of minutes, then mounted and rode away into the darkness and gloom.

Several months elapsed and the events of the winter quietude soon almost forgotten, and now came warm, sun-bright days in February. The apple-buds burst forth into beauty and fragrance, and the dogwood wore a bloom on the mountain-side. And the merry bird—old friend and long absent—returned with song and gladness.

Mr. Brakeley set out on a journey to the Manunkydemonia, in the unsettled condition of the country. On his route he was forced to travel many miles from home at the close of day and passed the night in a lonely distance at a dark inn. He was aware that he could not afford to travel so far abroad, but he determined nevertheless to proceed.

At a lonesome part of the road, winding through the woods, he was waylaid by three men who seized his horse by the bridle and bade him dismount and surrender the animal. The answer was a sharp blow with his riding-whip which felled the foremost to the ground. His companions opened a fusilade on the traveller, which was at once returned from across the road by a man, who, unobserved, had witnessed the assault.

The miscreants immediately decamped, and the stranger coming forward accompanied Mr. Brakeley a short distance, whose thanks for his timely assistance he briefly acknowledged and seemed indisposed to converse further. After going several miles, he stopped and turned to leave. As he raised his hat courteously, the moonlight fell upon his countenance and the traveller recognized his whilom guest, Lieut. Moody, the famous tory spy.³

OLD

³ In the library at the Old Brakeley House there is a rare little volume, EDITED BY MOODY'S *Narrative of his Exertions and sufferings in the Cause of Government since the year 1782*. London, 1782.

It is a fine copy and beautifully bound by Bedford,—perhaps a gift from the author.

III.

OLD CUSTOMS AND SUPERSTITIONS

It is a curious fact, that the English people, and especially the country people, still retain many of the customs and superstitions of the Olden Time.

THE belief in witchcraft was universal amongst the good folk of the country in the Olden Time. And if, gentle reader, you had lived in that favoured locality an hundred years ago, it would be scarcely necessary for me to advise you that a witch is an invisible being who rides through the air bestride a broom stick.

To bewitch persons or animals the witch must put an hand on them. It was believed that magical arts could not be practised so well in the open air as in houses. And therefore, in order to prevent witches from crossing the threshold, it was customary to nail an iron shoe above the door. In former times there was not a dwelling in the valley which was not thus protected in this manner.

The knots found in a colt's mane are witch-knots. A witch will mount a colt in the night and ride until it can scarcely walk the next morning. It was no uncommon occurrence to see two neighbours leaning upon the pasture fence to discuss the condition of the stock, and which had been ridden by the witches.¹

If witches are in the cream, the housewife must thrust into it a red hot poker, when they will leave.

It was a common saying that if you sell your soul to the devil and bury a looking-glass under the forks of a road, the witch will call always. If you do not speak to them, money can be found there.

¹ Campbell, Herodotus, Cyprian, &c.

How the Devil and his crew
Have the poor creature bewitched,
For they could never get
Wash the milk out of cream,
The colts were all witch-knots,
On which the Devil rode.

I remember hearing an old gossip of the valley relate the following instance of the devilish arts of the witch :

I once had occasion, being a young girl, to look for the cows which had strayed off to the woods. In my search, I passed by the cottage of a woman who was reputed in the neighbourhood to be in league with the devil. She was sitting before her spinning-wheel, and at that very moment was whittling a small stick, making one end sharp and the other blunt. To my inquiries, she replied (without looking up and with a sinister smile) that she had not seen the cows. I went my way, but when I found them and tried to milk them, out did pop the plug of wood which I saw the witch make.

It was an exceedingly difficult, not to say dangerous, undertaking to kill a witch ; yet Mr. Brakeley explains how it can be done easiest :

Make a fair likeness of the witch whose death is compass'd. Then load a gun with a silver bullet and shoot the pourtraiture. But if the witch is already dead, the ball will return and kill the person who aimed the gun.

Amongst some papers of a former generation, I find this curious record of the witchcraft superstition :

A neighbour's wife, who had a child bewitch'd, laid a broom across the door, and of the woman passing in and out she was appris'd that the witch would pick it up. Of a surety, the hag did take it up and laid it at one side, for such will never step over a broom. Then a cunning pourtraiture was made of her whom she suspicioned and shot with a silver bullet. The child waxed strong again, but the witch was cripp'l'd.

The craft of witchery was handed down, usually by the witch in her last extremity disclosing the dread secret to her chosen successor. In my early boyhood in Lopateong, a strange tale was still current of such transmission :

A number of little imps tightly enclosed in a box were given by an old witch to a young girl whom she desired should succeed her in the practice of the black art. The gift, however, was not appreciated, but the legatee was perplexed to know what safe disposition to make of it. She consulted Master Berger. By his directions, a fire was kindled in the oven and the box placed therein, securely fastening the door. Soon such unearthly yells and imprecations arose that all the good folk present fled in dismay. After some time, the horrid discord died away. When all was silent again, one bolder than the others cautiously opened the oven-door, but nothing was found except dust and ashes.

Mr

Mr. Bradley always a friend troubled with the malpractice of putting his shoes on retiring, to rest, carefully at his bed-side, common and general—that is, the toe of one shoe pointing in the direction of the head of the other,—and doubts not he will sleep soundly and well.

Old Christmas is January 6th, Old Style, when the bees will come out of their hives, the hops will grow, and the cows will add to their heads towards the East. The time is twelve o'clock at night. A great buzzing can be heard within the hive, and one of Mr. Bradley's neighbours—an old man—had actually seen them come out.

The first hives used in the valley were made of sections of an hollow log, with a board nailed on the top, of gum or sycamore, which is a tree of wood. Afterwards they were made of straw. It is supposed that the gradual disappearance of the wild bee is due to the presence of the domestic. They were plentiful in the Olden Time, and the hunting and gathering of honey was quite an occupation. There was an old man—probably the same old gentleman that saw the bees come out—who could keep himself from taking his bee-trees. He would walk around the trees muttering some magical words, and whoever got within the circle would have to stay there until he released them. On Candlemas-day it was customary to move the bee-hives, keeping them on the same board, but farther along, on to the new place.

If a member of the family die, an obsequy must go to call the bees—and notify them, lest they also languish. When Mr. Bradley died, a neighbour performed this ceremony, and at each hive made the important announcement: *Your master is dead!*

The death omen in various forms possessed the power of communicating alarm. The dim figure of the Gray Witch glided out by the coming sheet in the candle, the coffin-shaped candle exploding from the fireplace, all were looked upon as presaging evil. But the shape of the candle, supposed to represent a coffin or a purse, so nearly resembles each other that the wisest are vainly perplexed to decide between omen of wealth or death, yet none more import—whether there will be a rebirth of the family, or a sudden extinction of wealth.

The howling of a dog at the door is a sign of an approaching death in the household. Dogs can even see Death enter the house, when a person is about to die.

An undertaker having a hole in his tomb, caused it to be a coffin and a coffin.

When

When a corpse is limp it is a sign that another death will occur soon in that house.

An horse neighing at a funeral denotes that there will be another burying before long. If a man starts away first it will be a woman, and *vice versa*.

The screech of the owl, issuing at night-time from the forest, was heard with alarm. Its notes are, indeed, somewhat startling. Wilson, the ornithologist, says :

This ghostly watchman has frequently warned me of the approach of morning, sweeping down and around my fires, uttering a loud and sudden " Waugh O! Waugh O!" sufficient to have alarmed a whole garrison. He has other nocturnal solos, one of which very strikingly resembles the half-suppressed scream of a person suffocating or throttled.

There was a superstition that robins will sing near the window when a person is dying. I have heard old folk relate the legend that this bird attended our Lord on the Cross, and was there sprinkled with His blood, the marks of which the little songster still carries on his ruddy breast. Wherefore it was considered sacrilegious to harm one.

The wild swan was not uncommon in those early days, and the autumnal migrations of this bird gave rise to a singular superstition. They usually crossed the valley by night, and in dull, cloudy weather, keeping up a continual calling to each other. It was thought that these mysterious, nocturnal sounds proceeded from a pack of demon dogs, yclept Gabriel's Hounds—evil spirits hounding forward the souls of the damned to eternal punishment. It was a solemn and impressive moment to all, and was dedicated to prayer and supplication for the lost.

Those who have listened to the death-song of the dying swan can never forget its wondrous melody.

Amongst the many superstitions relating to the homely details of farm life may be enumerated the following :

Potatoes planted in the sign of the Lion will grow large ; in the sign of the Fish will grow double.

Stungles nailed on the roof when the moon points up will not stay to their places, but will even draw the nails from the lath.

The bottom rail will move and dislodge the fence it had when the moon points up.

Meat killed in the increase of the moon will increase in weight until the moon becomes full, and *vice versa*.

(1) *And the first of the seed was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (2) *And the second was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (3) *And the third was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (4) *And the fourth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (5) *And the fifth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (6) *And the sixth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (7) *And the seventh was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (8) *And the eighth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (9) *And the ninth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (10) *And the tenth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (11) *And the eleventh was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (12) *And the twelfth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (13) *And the thirteenth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (14) *And the fourteenth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (15) *And the fifteenth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (16) *And the sixteenth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (17) *And the seventeenth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (18) *And the eighteenth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (19) *And the nineteenth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (20) *And the twentieth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (21) *And the twenty-first was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (22) *And the twenty-second was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (23) *And the twenty-third was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (24) *And the twenty-fourth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (25) *And the twenty-fifth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (26) *And the twenty-sixth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (27) *And the twenty-seventh was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (28) *And the twenty-eighth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (29) *And the twenty-ninth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (30) *And the thirtieth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (31) *And the thirty-first was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (32) *And the thirty-second was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (33) *And the thirty-third was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (34) *And the thirty-fourth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (35) *And the thirty-fifth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (36) *And the thirty-sixth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (37) *And the thirty-seventh was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (38) *And the thirty-eighth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (39) *And the thirty-ninth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (40) *And the fortieth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (41) *And the forty-first was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (42) *And the forty-second was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (43) *And the forty-third was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (44) *And the forty-fourth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (45) *And the forty-fifth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (46) *And the forty-sixth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (47) *And the forty-seventh was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (48) *And the forty-eighth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (49) *And the forty-ninth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (50) *And the fiftieth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (51) *And the fifty-first was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (52) *And the fifty-second was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (53) *And the fifty-third was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (54) *And the fifty-fourth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (55) *And the fifty-fifth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (56) *And the fifty-sixth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (57) *And the fifty-seventh was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (58) *And the fifty-eighth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (59) *And the fifty-ninth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (60) *And the sixtieth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (61) *And the sixty-first was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (62) *And the sixty-second was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (63) *And the sixty-third was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (64) *And the sixty-fourth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (65) *And the sixty-fifth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (66) *And the sixty-sixth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (67) *And the sixty-seventh was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (68) *And the sixty-eighth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (69) *And the sixty-ninth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (70) *And the seventieth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (71) *And the seventy-first was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (72) *And the seventy-second was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (73) *And the seventy-third was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (74) *And the seventy-fourth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (75) *And the seventy-fifth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (76) *And the seventy-sixth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (77) *And the seventy-seventh was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (78) *And the seventy-eighth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (79) *And the seventy-ninth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (80) *And the eightieth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (81) *And the eighty-first was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (82) *And the eighty-second was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (83) *And the eighty-third was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (84) *And the eighty-fourth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (85) *And the eighty-fifth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (86) *And the eighty-sixth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (87) *And the eighty-seventh was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (88) *And the eighty-eighth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (89) *And the eighty-ninth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (90) *And the ninetieth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (91) *And the ninety-first was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (92) *And the ninety-second was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (93) *And the ninety-third was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (94) *And the ninety-fourth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (95) *And the ninety-fifth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (96) *And the ninety-sixth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (97) *And the ninety-seventh was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (98) *And the ninety-eighth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (99) *And the ninety-ninth was a golden apple, which she gave to the prince.*
 (100) *And the hundredth was a silver apple, which she gave to the prince.*

It was quite possible to fathom the design of Gwendolyn by naming and counting the tell tale apples. The old-fashioned maiden, anxious to know the name of him whom she would subject to this crucial test, cuts the apple, carefully saving the seeds. Then she count

- 1-10 seeds,
- 2-10 seeds,
- 3-10 seeds,
- 4-10 seeds with no seeds,
- 5-10 seeds,
- 6-10 seeds.

7—Sho love!

8—Both love!

(Here the theme *loome* absorbing.)

9—He comes,

10—He taries,

11—He courts,

12—He marries!

A man had better ne'er been born,
As have his nails on a Sunday shorn.

And to the same effect is an old rhyme :

Cut them on Monday, cut them for health;
Cut them on Tuesday, cut them for wealth;
Cut them on Wednesday, cut them for news;
Cut them on Thursday, for a pair of new shoes,
Cut them on Friday, cut them for sorrow;
Cut them on Saturday, see you sweetheart to-morrow
Cut them on Sunday, cut them for evil;
For all the week long will be with you the *Dævil*!

The sluggard was hardly dealt with by our sturdy and industrious forefathers, and many of their wise saws inveigh against slothfulness :

Early to bed, and early to rise,
Will make a man healthy, wealthy and wise.

He that will thrive must rise at five;
He that has thriven may sleep till seven.

Plough deep whilst others sleep,
And you will have corn to sell and keep.

There are no gains without pains;
Then plough deep whilst sluggards sleep.

The sluggard's guise,
Loth to bed, loth to rise,

Nature requires five,	} Hours of sleep.
Custom takes seven,	
Lazine tak's nine,	
And wakefulness eleven,	

And Mr Brakeley, who was habitually an early riser, might have added, with honest old Tusser,

Some work in the mornin may truly be done,
That all the day after can hardly be won.

The

And if on arising she step from her bed upon something higher still, she will from that hour rise in the world. But woe betide her should she fall!

If the bridal party venture off dry land they must go up-stream. To look back or go back before gaining the church door, to marry in green, or whilst there is an open grave in the churchyard, all were considered unfortunate. The bride should be careful in leaving the house and church to put her right foot forward, and to go in at one door and out at another, and to suffer no one to speak to her husband until she has called him by name.

The bride, to be lucky, must wear—

Something old and something new,
Something gold and something blue.

When the bridesmaids undress her they must throw away all the pins. Woe to the bride if a single one be left about her,—nothing will go right. Woe to the bridesmaids if they keep one of them, for they will not be married before Whitsuntide, or until the Easter following at the soonest. Maidens, I conjure you, have care!

To break the wedding ring signifies that the wearer will soon be a widow, but—

As your wedding ring wears,
So will wear away your cares.

An old rhyme tells of the superstition attaching to birthdays:

Monday's child is full of merriment,
Tuesday's child is full of grace;
Wednesday's child is full of woe,
Thursday's child has far to go;
Friday's child is loved and given,
Saturday's child will work for a living;
But the child that's born on the Sabbath day
Is fair and brave and good and gay.

Mr. Brakeley was a careful observer of atmospheric changes. When in the morning the mist hung about the base of the mountains, he predicted clear weather; but if the mist went up, the rain came down. He notes the following also as signs of rain:

Which is common, entirely dried up, or coldly commence running with clean water without previous rain.

Which

Across the valley, at the foot of the mountains, lived a little old man who possessed in a rare degree the art of divination. When a well was to be digged his services were invaluable. For a sum of money trifling in comparison to the loss entailed by a wrong location, he would designate the exact spot where water could be found. Of course, it was not to be expected that the seer would explain otherwise than vaguely so remunerative a gift, for which reason Mr. Brakeley regretted that he could give but meagre details of the proceedings. A peach branch was cut carefully—one with three prongs. Then he would trim and anoint it with an unknown liquid from a small vial which he carried with him, muttering the while unintelligibly. At the conclusion of this ceremony, holding the branch loosely in both hands before him, he would advance slowly. Suddenly, at the presence of water in the ground underneath, it was seen to dip in a mysterious manner. The well was located!

My great-aunt remembered the Simple-Room in the old manor-house,—a low-raftered, narrow gallery opening off the great hall and dimly lighted by a small aperture. On one side were long rows of shelves filled with herbs and barks and dried fruits and preserves. Against the wall opposite hung branches of thyme, catnip, etc. Every year, a full supply of these simples were gathered from the woods and fields.

The ground is solid and icy and creeks and swamps are frozen over. The roads, without bridges across the streams, were scarcely more than a passage-way chopped through the forest which covered the face of the land; but the farmer takes advantage of their present excellent condition to convey his produce to market, going sometimes as far as Burlington. On these expeditions, Mr. Brakeley and Rodney would take with them grain, cider and furs to exchange for salt, powder, and manufactured goods. But the latter, being exceedingly dear, were bought sparingly and after much bartering.

Notwithstanding that no farm work could be done, it was yet a busy month. Trapping fur-bearing animals and deer-stalking in the mountains, hauling and chopping the year's supply of firewood and fence material, together with receiving and returning visits in the neighbourhood, occupied fully the day.

Usually about the middle of the month comes a thaw, but if it lasts too long and the weather grows unseasonably warm it forebodes a cold, late spring. Thus old folk were wont to say:

If the grass grows in Janiver,
It grows the worse for't all the year,

and again:

If Janiver calends be summerly gay,
'Twill be winterly weather till the calends of May.

The weather, too, was carefully observed on St. Vincent's day, Jan. 22d:

Remember on St. Vincent's day,
If the sun his beams display,
Be sure to mark the transient beam
Which through the vacuum air is a gleam;
For 'tis a token bright and clear,
Of prosperous weather all the year;
But if by chance it then should run,
It will make dead all food of grain;
And if the clouds make dark the day,
Then meat and fowl this year shall die;
If the strong winds do blow aloft,
Then wars will trouble the land full oft.

Mr. Brakeley was always glad to see plenty of snow in this month, † and

† Castle

† From a reliable source, I have the following interesting account of the Winter of the Dec. Snow, 1835-6:

The month of November had been very mild until the night of Wednesday, 18th, or Thursday, 19th, when the first snow fell to the depth of two inches, which was covered with an

And in regard to the lengthening of the day at this season :

At New-Year's day a cock's stride,
At Candlemas-day an hour wide,

It was also the belief of the superstitious that on this day the ground-hog came out of his hole, but if he saw his shadow he went back, and there were six weeks more of winter.

MARCH.

March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb,
March comes in with an adder's head and goes out with a peacock's tail,
March, many weathers,

Such were the opinions held of old concerning this month in Lopatcong,—season of wind, rain, and sleet! Yet even now the tree is feeling the throbs of the new life to which it is just awakening. Here and there in the forest were large maple groves. The sap is running plentifully, and Mr. Brakeley and Rodney collect the year's supply of syrup and sugar—an important item in the household economy of that olden time.

March winds and April showers
Bring forth May flowers,
So many mists in March you see,
So many frosts in May will be,
March does from April gain
Three days, and they're in rain;
Return'd by April in bad kind,
Three days, and they're in wind,
March wind and May sun
Make clothes white and maids dun,

The roads are in a very muddy condition and wellnigh impassable, as the frost is just leaving the ground. It is hardly possible to take the women folk even a-horseback to the Straw Church Sundays, which sometimes accounts for the small attendance there.

APRIL.

The bee doth love the sweetest flower,
So doth the blossom the April shower,
April showers bring May flower,
Sweet as an April meadow,

This

This is a most delightful season in Lopatecong. The woods are vocal with bird songs. The buds of the trees begin to swell and burst into leaf. And the crocuses are a bloom in the old garden. It is a busy time for the husbandman. The spring plowing and seeding must be done, but Mr. Brakeley cannot resist the temptation to spend a day abroad in his favourite haunts. "In those vernal seasons of the year, when the air is calm and pleasant, it were an injury and pollution against Nature not to go out and see her riches and partake in her rejoicings with heaven and earth."—MITCHELL.

Yet this sudden transition from winter to summer is attended sometimes with disastrous floods. The snow and ice melt in the warm sun, often there is a superabundance of rain, and every rivulet becomes a raging torrent. The rivers are swollen beyond their banks and cause immense destruction. About the year 1754, there was the greatest flood which Mr. Brakeley remembered. It rained continuously for nearly a fortnight and the deep snows of the winter went off in devastating waters.

April and May are the best of the weather here,
 A mild April with a fair weather,
 When April shows his horns,
 It's good for both May and June.
 Snow is no more in the state of the snow,
 When March's storm comes, he should be gone.

MAY.

The best of months of May
 A good time for business in May.

The woods and fields are fresh and verdant, for summer-tide approaches. Tilling and planting the soil engages the husbandman. It is also the best month of all the year for trout fishing, for which in early days the Lopatecong stream was famous.

It's a good time in May
 Will you be a fisher,
 It's a good time in May
 Will you be a fisher,
 It's a good time in May
 Will you be a fisher.

A

The best of months of May
 A good time for business in May.

A wet May will fill the mow full of hay,

A swarm of bees in May

Is worth a load of hay ;

A swarm of bees in June,

Is worth a silver spoon ;

A swarm of bees in July,

Is not worth a fly,*

If you look at your corn in May,

You'll come weeping away ;

If you look at the same in June,

You'll come home in another tune.

When the dogwood-blossom turns yellow, it is high time to plant corn, which was the principal crop.

JUNE.

In this month occurs one of the most important epochs of the year. On the morning of the 21st day, the sun reaches his extreme point of Northern declination and inaugurates the Summer Solstice. The great central orb now pours his most intense rays upon the earth and his departing light lingers longest above the horizon. The valley is beautiful and peaceful in these soft summer days. The roses bloom profusely, clambering for support about the eaves of the old manor-house. The fields are white with daisies and other wild flowers and the air is redolent with their fragrance.

Calm weather in June
Sets corn in time.

The corn is plowed and the grain-fields guarded to prevent the depredations of wild turkeys and pigeons. It may surprise some of my readers to learn how great a pest these wild fowl were in those days. Some of the fields, at a distance from the house, were surrounded by woods, and it was necessary to watch them carefully.

The hay is cut—a very different matter nowadays. A late writer remarks upon the revolution which has taken place in the methods of husbandry during the period of a generation. Scientific discovery and skill in the construction of labour-saving machinery have accomplished greater changes in the haying field than in the workshop.

Not many years ago, haying was the most labourious occupation on farms. It employed not only all the men and boys on the place, but all that could

Take heed to y^e bees, y^e are ready to swarm,

The loom y^e of now is a crown's worth of harrow,—*Th. H. C.*

could be procured in the neighbourhood. "There are often many kinds of hands," were supposed to be, as men in an open market would be, the farmers told. They were wary of receiving higher wages than could be obtained in most other employments. Not infrequently women undertook the cutting on their hand. They spread out the green grass under the scythe, raked it out, and "followed the cut" that the men were making. It was sometimes necessary to employ all the available hands in the neighbourhood in order to secure the hay crop in proper season. Haymakers were obliged to work very long hours. The mowers were expected to be up at daylight and to be in the field before sunrise. Time was often too precious to admit of going to the farm house to obtain meals. "Make hay, it's said, 'whilst the sun shines.'" So lunch and dinner were brought out to the field and supper was not eaten until too dark to labour at work. With the many labourers, the hard work and the long hours, the haymaking season was extended through fully two months.

Haymaking has become comparatively easy work, employing only the ordinary number of farm hands. Old men, women, girls and boys are no longer seen in the haymaking-field. There is nothing for them to do. The hours for haying are no longer than for ploughing and cultivating. It is not now easy to cut grass whilst the dew is upon it because the work is too easier. The machine and the horses that draw it never complaining of being fatigued. The labourer does not go to the field in the morning twilight nor remain until dark. Farmers raise no root crops for feeding nor any hay for winter pasturage.

All the pastoral poets from Virgil to Wordsworth have sung of the merry haymakers. The painters of every land have portrayed the picturesque scenes of the haying field to canvas. They have shown the men bonding to their work, the boys spreading out the grass to dry, the women and girls, clad in scarlet frocks, with daisy bonnets on their heads, raking the hay, and the strong men pitching it upon the cart wheel but for the rick.

"I know nothing," writes an English novelist, "of the rule of sound and yet of peace-bestowing, as the sound, in the rhythmic of the music, of the whetting of scythes." It is the happy melancholy of the rural scene and the roar of the crowded city; so exultating, so sensibly and so so undisturbing is it—unaffected musick. What a quiet, happy laugh there is in it! What half-faded humour, what friendly good nature! The sound never ceased. Field after field took up the merry morning musick. Sometimes it was played on a perfect orchestra of instruments.

JULY.

The Dog-Days begin in this month. Our ancestors supposed that when the dog-star is in conjunction with the sun, the sea boils, wine ferments, dogs go mad and all other animals languish. It is productive in men of boils, phrensies and malignant fevers. Physick should be eschewed at this time and suffer nature to work out her own cure.

The grain is ripe and fit to cut during the forepart of this month, which was done slowly and labouriously with the scythe. But what merry scenes followed! How the good folk of the Olden Time celebrated the decline of the year, and the joyous youths and maidens danced by the light of the moon! This celebration was called the Harvest Home and took place after the crops were safely garnered.

AUGUST.

The harvest is over, but now it is time to clear off new ground and prepare for seeding. The forest rings with the woodman's ax and a loud crash is heard as some giant tree totters and falls. The branches are lopped off, the underbrush gathered in heaps and the earth grubbed and made ready to receive the seed. At this season of the year, vegetation is easily killed and the tree when once cut down is less likely to sprout again. When perfectly dry, the brush is burned, usually by night, and sometimes the whole valley is lighted up with the numerous clearing fires.

SEPTEMBER.

This is the fruit month. Apples are ripe and the grapes growing wild in the woods. The seeding is completed* and the corn is cut and shocked before the frost catches it, which is pretty sure to come before the 29th, Michaelmas-day.

The moon of this month is called the Harvest Moon.†

OCTOBER.

* Wife, some time this weeke, if the weather hold clear,
An end of wheat sowing we make for this year;
Remember you, therefore, tho' I do it not,
The seed cake, the pasties, and firmittie pot,—*Yester.*

† The Harvest Moon is the full moon which falls on or near the 21st of this month. Its peculiarity is that it rises more closely after sunset for a number of nights after the full than any other full moon in the year. This results in four or five successive nights being almost moonlit, and the opportunity thus given for evening work in harvesting has led to the name of this full moon. The difference between the moon's time of rising on successive nights averages about

()CГОВИ

The mountains are gorgeous in their many coloured garb. The sharp frosts have dyed the foliage a deep crimson or yellow. The year is growing old, but perhaps at no other season is the valley so beautiful.

Come, boys. The corn must be husked and garnered, although it is pleasant to take a day off to hunt wild turkeys, quail, pheasants and squirrels, which are now plentiful. But after all there was no sport equal to coon-hunting with Rodney. The coon is in prime condition, having lately been making sad havoc in the corn fields, and Mr. Brakeley con-
fessed to having spent whole nights in the chase.

Nuts are ripe and a full supply is gathered for the winter, particularly of walnuts, hickory-nuts and chestnuts. To go a-nutting was a favourite diversion with the young folk.

The moon of this month is called the Hunter's Moon

NOVEMBER.

The days are growing perceptibly shorter. The leaves have fallen and the forest has taken on a dull, leaden hue. The air is raw and chilly, often blustery. Winter approaches. It is now that most danger is apprehended from forest fires. Mr. Brakeley has seen the mountains ablaze—a grand sight—and heard the cracking of the devouring flames in the valley below.

Great destruction is sometimes wrought—buildings and fences burned and timber destroyed—before it can be quenched. The whole community—men, women and children—turn out to fight the dread monster.

During this month there is a season of mild, soft weather lasting a week, or at most a few days. The atmosphere is hazy but calm. It is the Indian Summer,—summer lingering on the threshold of winter as if loth to depart.

As the wind is in the month of November so it will be in December.

Thunder in November indicates a fertile year to come.

If there be ice in November that will bear a duck,
There will be nothing thereafter but sleet and muck.

If St. Martin's day (November 11th) be cold, fair and dry, the cold in winter will not be long.

If the geese stand on ice St. Martin's day
They will walk in mud Christmas day.

When in November the water rises, it will show itself the whole winter.

As November 21st so the whole winter.

As St. Catherine's day (November 29th), foul or fair, so will be next February.

As November, so the following March.

If the leaves of the trees and grape vines do not fall before Martin's day, a cold winter may be expected.

DECEMBER.

Winter has come at last! During the past month, it gave frequent admonitions of its approach—frosty nights and light squalls of snow. But here it is in earnest. Copse and close are enveloped in a far-reaching, white mantle and cold winds prevail. The farmer slaughters his swine just as soon now as the moon is right and cures and salts down the meat. The bee-trees which Mr. Brakeley and Rodney found during the summer are cut and the hive pillaged of its hoard of honey. Deer-stalking is in season and many a fine saddle of venison graces the humble board or is taken down the river to exchange for household commodities. The women folk are busy, spinning and weaving. But in the long winter evening, all gather before the glowing hearth to listen to the pleasing fictions of the storyteller.

"December crowns the longest nights of all the year" with a superb picture

* The day decreases in length during December until the 17th of the month, when the minimum is reached. After this they remain of the same length, oh, Sir, until the 25th, when they increase to the same length as the day of one previous month, a tangible proof that the sun has turned his face northward. On the 31st the increase amounts to thirty minutes.

picture of the glory of the heavens. The light of the million stars of frosty
the stars sparkle and shine with their most resplendent lustre, pouring
down upon the frost-bound earth their great influence. When the full
moon makes her rapid way over the firmament from sunset to sunrise, her
round face is glorious to behold, as high above the dark blue sky she
over the snow and a flood of soft, silvery light.

How beautiful the country appears in winter garb! At this time
indeed an abundance of snow has usually fallen, indeed, it has been so
calamitous if the ground was still bare:

THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS

The festivities of the Holidays close a busy and happy year with
The brand from the last burning is brought forth to kindle the Christmas
fire. The hall is gayly decorated with evergreens and a mass of merriment
and good cheer speeds the Old and welcomes the New Year in
Lopateong.

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